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Critical Factors Affecting Leadership: A Higher Education Context

Abstract

Purpose: While the importance of leadership in various domains has been highlighted in the extant literature, effective leadership in the context of higher education sector has not been well addressed in the leadership scholarship. There is a need to address the challenge of leadership effectiveness in the education sector including business schools given the failures noticed in the sector attributed to poor quality leadership. There exists a major area of concern that calls for an investigation into this problem and therefore there was a need to explore the factors that affected leadership in the context of higher education institutions (HEIs).

Design/methodology/approach: The research is exploratory in nature as the study critically reviewed extant literature surrounding leadership practices specifically from a public-sector context to identify factors affecting leadership effectiveness.

Findings: The findings of the study pointed out that regardless of the nation or organisation, leadership effectiveness is a factor that is dependent on how well the followers have accepted the leader. This indicates that amongst the different challenges explored in this study, leadership effectiveness is not only a challenge by itself but is also affected by other challenges including leadership practice and style.

Research limitations/implications: This research provides a better understanding of the critical factors affecting leadership practice of deans of business schools and how the styles' influence on leadership practice, the relationship between leadership practice and leadership effectiveness and how leadership style translates into leadership effectiveness.

Originality/value: This research contributes to the growing body of knowledge surrounding leadership scholarship from a public-sector context about the challenges that affect leadership effectiveness in the context of HEIs and stimulates further investigation into those challenges.

Keywords: leadership styles, leadership practice, leadership effectiveness, higher education institutions, public sector

1. Introduction

Ubiquitous is the word used by Vroom and Jago (2007) for the term leadership, indicating the widespread use of leadership in common discourses. However, Bennis and Nanus (1985), like Vroom and Jago (2007) assert that no clear and unequivocal understanding exists in leadership literature that helps in distinguishing leaders from non-leaders. This aspect has been time and again highlighted in leadership literature in many fields including education (Buschman, 2016; Ghasabeh et al., 2015; Sahay & Baul, 2014). In fact, the extent of the use of the term ‘leadership’ in many fields has grown a great deal in, for instance, politics, media and organisations. Moreover, leadership as a concept has become a big challenge in many contexts including higher education from a public-sector context. It is certain that there are clear leadership differences between public and private sector organisations and extant literature highlights that organisational aims and objectives as one of the key factor (Chaston, 2010; Wright et al., 2012). Other factors influencing the leadership style between private and public-sector organisations relate to organisational stakeholders and expectations, the levels of public scrutiny and its impacts and sources of motivation for employees (Silvia and McGuire 2010; Wright et al., 2012).

From a public-sector context and specifically in the field of higher education institution (HEIs), the concept of leadership has begun to raise issues for business school leaders. The problem created by the lack of effective leadership has been found to exist in the context of business schools, as is the case in every organisation, regardless of nature or type (Bryman, 2007; Scott et al., 2008; Swanger, 2016). Although business schools purport to offer the best education in business (Ivory et al., 2006), the manner in which business school leaders lead the business schools and the skills and abilities of graduates of business schools to lead in commerce and industry has come under scrutiny (Ivory et al., 2006; Findlay et al. 2016). A need to study both the leaders of business schools and the impact of business education on the students, who are future leaders, has been the subject of growing debate (Cavico & Mujtaba, 2009; Gigliotti & Ruben, 2017). A review of the literature reveals that limited research has been conducted that informs research and practice with regards to the roles and functioning of the deans of business schools, including as leaders (Davies & Thomas, 2009; Association of Business Schools, 2014). Association of Business Schools (2014) has pointed out that only a few studies have been conducted on business school leaders and informs how important it is to have able leaders in business schools as those schools’ mission is to produce future leaders

who make a difference to the world. Whether this is really happening is a matter that is open to question as hardly any evidence is there to know how deans of business schools contribute in producing future leaders (Findlay et al. 2016).

While the importance of leadership in various domains has been highlighted in the literature, effective leadership in the context of higher education including business schools has not been well addressed in the leadership literature (Ivory et al., 2008; Ruben et al. 2017). There is a need to address the challenges of leadership effectiveness in the education sector including business schools (Ivory et al., 2006; Gigliotti & Ruben, 2017) especially in the context of recent failures noticed in the industry attributed to poor quality of leadership exhibited by former students of reputed business schools in those industries. There exists a major area of concern that calls for an investigation into this problem (Cavico & Mujtaba, 2009; Gigliotti & Ruben, 2017). Therefore, the aim of this research is to explore the factors that affect effective leadership in the context of higher education institutions.

2. Research Background and Context

Leadership has been a significant topic of interest over several decades (Kovjanic, et al., 2012; Breakwell, and Tytherleigh, 2010). Yukl (2010) argues that leadership as a concept is widely considered to be a key factor for the success of an organisation. Literature on leadership highlights that lately employers have been found to be dissatisfied with the business schools, with teaching in business schools coming in for sharp criticism (Ivory et al., 2006). Furthermore, there is evidence that there is a decline in the number of students registering for the Masters of Business Administration (MBA) degree programmes offered by business schools (Ivory et al., 2006; AACSB International, 2016), another possible indicator highlighting the need to look again at the quality of education provision in business schools (see Table 1).

REGION	YEAR	FULL TIME	% CHANGE (2010-2015)
Canada	2010–11	62.5%	-2.5%
	2014–15	60.0%	
United States	2010–11	46.8%	- 5%
	2014–15	41.8%	
Asia (excluding Near & Middle East)	2010–11	43.5%	-10.1%
	2014–15	33.4%	

Table 1: Enrollment pattern in MBA (Source: AACSB International, 2016)

Business schools and business education helps students to develop their ability to think critically, communicate effectively and manage firms in such a manner that they can serve the community in a successful and responsible manner. Deans of business schools, who are considered the leaders of those schools (Davies & Thomas, 2009; Association of Business Schools, 2014) have an important role in affecting the learning environment in which they do so. Almog-Bareket (2012) pointed out that there is a need for visionary leadership in business schools and suggests that vigorous visionary leadership among deans is required in order to generate a unique school identity and reputation. One of the deans of a business school in the US emphasized (an argument echoed by others) that business schools must use the opportunity to do more in terms of contributing to the success of the future leaders who graduate from business schools and stressed on the need to include ethical thinking as part of the curriculum (Adenekan, 2009; Association of Business Schools, 2014). Adding to the debate of business schools need for effective leadership by deans, there have also been growing concerns over the challenges faced by these leaders (Ivory et al., 2006; Cherif et al. 2016). While it must be noted that some (e.g. Almog-Bareket, 2012, Davies & Thomas, 2009) have started to attempt to address the challenges faced by the business schools and the deans, Ivory et al. (2006) point out that those research outcomes which have addressed the challenges faced by business schools are not consistent and are fragmented. When taken cognizance of, this statement of Ivory et al. (2006) and the argument of Association of Business Schools (2014) which says that only few studies have been conducted on business school leaders, there is a clear indication that there is a need to investigate the challenges faced by the business schools further.

Against this backdrop, there is a need to look at how deans could be linked to the success or failure of the students as future leaders. This is certainly a contentious issue in the academic literature. For instance, some feel that deans are ambidextrous professionals (Fagin, 1997) who are forced to manage the business school at the edge of chaos produced due to the hyper-turbulent environment that they have to cope with (Smith & Graetz, 2006). However, there are also other scholars (e.g. Symonds, 2009) who point out that deans of business schools have fairly recently enjoyed enormous clout and benefited from excellent facilities and have had good pay, prestige and the opportunity to mix with the great and good of business and have used this for working towards building their own career, possibly at the expense of enhancing students' education (Starkey & Tiratsoo, 2007). Findlay et al. (2016) highlights

that potential new leaders of business schools are young, inexperienced and may lack the skills needed to address pressing issues of the academy.

Despite conflicting opinions about the description on what deans are responsible for and what a dean's position entails, various internal and external challenges affecting the business schools have made the dean's vulnerable to failure as leaders (Davies & Thomas, 2009). While some (e.g. Ivory et al., 2006) have investigated what could be done to alleviate the problems faced by deans of business schools and proposed various measures to deal with the challenges surrounding them, some others (e.g. Davies & Thomas, 2009; Findlay et al. 2016) have pointed out the need to study how deans could be supported to be leaders through a leadership-centric approach, and thus lead their school to success. Leadership aspects pose a challenge to deans of business schools, a research area that needs to be addressed. Furthermore, in order to address the leadership aspects, it is necessary to know more about the challenges that need to be tackled as part of the leadership-centric approach.

There are a number of challenges leaders in HEIs encounter, for instance deans of business schools, face which include leadership style (Bass & Avolio, 2000), leadership practice (Astin & Astin, 2000), management style (Northouse, 2004), organisational setting (Chen & Huang, 2007), organisational culture (Latham, 2013), decision quality (Muhammad et al., 2009), follower commitment (Kouzes & Posner, 2002), follower satisfaction (Verhaegen, 2005) and leadership effectiveness (Basham, 2010). Although these specific challenges are not the only ones that affect business schools and deans as leaders, it is reasonable to argue that investigating a few challenges at a time helps in making the research process more efficient, less complex and easier without sacrificing the quality that is needed to be built into the research. The outcomes of the investigation of those challenges can become the beacon for future research.

One important aspect of the leadership discourse that has been highlighted is the study of the leadership concept from many perspectives, for instance from the perspective of followers (Spreitzer et al., 2005) or institution (Drucker, 1986) or customers (Hooijberg & Denison, 2002). Some of the emphasis on leadership has been with respect to the followers (e.g. Spreitzer et al., 2005). As some (e.g. Hollander, 2008) argue, followers are the key to the leaders' success and it is the followers' perspective that draws one's attention to good and bad leadership (e.g. Hollander, 2008). Hollander (2008), for example, claims that to achieve

effectiveness in leadership, attention to the interests and needs of the followers is essential. This argument is supported by Wills (1994) who says that it is the followers who judge leaders, and leaders can only be considered to have any impact if they pass this test (also see Bloom & McClellan, 2016). This applies, also, to the context of deans of business schools. For instance academic and administrative staff are considered as the followers of the dean of business schools and they cannot and should not be left out of any study on leaders or leadership given their centrality (Hollander, 2008). In some studies students are also considered followers of deans (Bloom & McClellan, 2016).

On a different note it must be mentioned that effectiveness of leadership is an important challenge that is argued to depend on how well the leader's characteristics and practices fit with the organisational contingencies and to what extent followers have accepted the leader regardless of the organisation type or nation. Such an inference is seen in a study conducted by House et al. (2002) which sought to investigate what is considered as effective leadership with respect to psychological welfare and international competitiveness across the world. The study involved 900 organisations and 17,000 respondents. The findings of the study pointed out that regardless of the nation or organisation, leadership effectiveness is a factor that is dependent on how well the followers have accepted the leader. This indicates that amongst the different challenges mentioned above in this paper, leadership effectiveness is not only a challenge by itself but is also affected by other challenges including leadership practice and style. Thus, greater focus on leadership effectiveness as a challenge is necessary.

The preceding arguments have highlighted the various contextual aspects that need to be considered in understanding the leadership process problems in business schools. In addition, the discussions have highlighted the various challenges that are faced by the deans of business schools. However, the main challenges related to leadership in business schools and factors affecting leadership process is not well understood. This study aims to address this gap in the literature.

3. Significance of Leadership in Higher Education

Leadership in higher education has become one of the most widely discussed topics of research of late. Business schools in particular have been in focus in the recent past with regard to the whole system of delivering education since there is an assumption that success of business schools in producing successful leaders in business could largely depend on

having able leaders within the schools. Though there has been a number of studies with a spotlight on the HEIs (for example, Ivory et al., 2007; Boer & Goedegebuure, 2009; Gigliotti & Ruben, 2017), literature indicates that leadership and management in HEIs are considered major challenges that need to be closely examined.

There is a growing recognition that leadership development is important to different types of organisations including institutions of higher education (Pfeffer, 2009; Findlay et al. 2016). In this context, Hewitt (2008) argues that successful companies have great leaders consistently, an argument that could have resonance in the context of institutions of higher education. One of the benefits that appears to have accrued to companies that have focused on leadership development is that they could help leaders improve the business using their improved leadership skills. Pfeffer (2009) (also see Findlay et al. 2016) claims that a similar effort is needed in institutions of higher education to develop leadership talent leading to an argument that leadership is an important factor that needs to be considered by higher educational institutions (HEIs). De Boer and Goedegebuure (2001) argue that there is a growing emphasis on the role of deans as leaders in many institutions, an argument that finds support in Association of Business Schools (2014). However, there is no consensus about the essence of leadership or the means by which it can be identified, achieved or measured (Bennis & Nanus, 1985). Some (Bolden et al., 2009) have highlighted the attempts made by some institutions of higher education (universities) to view the deans as the heart of their effort in modernizing the managerial structure.

In the same vein, Huy (2001) and de Boer and Goedegebuure (2001) propose that the role of deans is as an interface between the top-down strategy and bottom-up operations employed in HEIs. De Boer and Goedegebuure (2001) consider that the dean can play a pivotal role in the management of HEIs. However, de Boer and Goedegebuure (2001) also bring out that in many countries the role of a dean is in a state of flux, leading to the inference that if things are changing, we need to better understand how and why. For instance, one report shows that in the UK 18% of the head of business schools are acting deans or the post is being advertised (Association of Business Schools, 2014). In the modern era the concept of managerialism, especially public-sector managerialism, is making incursions into the education sector including HEIs. Here the concept of managerial capability of deans comes into focus. Thus, on the one hand leadership skills of deans are under the microscope and on the other the managerial skills of deans are under scrutiny in many HEIs leading to the inference that the

concepts of deans as leaders and managers and the relationship between these concepts could impact the HEIs. A logical question therefore is how leaders face the challenges of balancing management with leadership. Indeed, one can be a good leader and bad manager as well as a good manager and bad leader. This aspect needs further study.

Additionally, with regard to the context of studying the relationship between deans as leaders and managers there appear to be multiple models, for instance, managerial, corporate and entrepreneurial models (Clark, 1998; Bargh et al., 1996; McNay, 1995) that could be used. In another instance, Collinson and Collinson (2009) provide a comparative account on how leadership is perceived by fellow staff members of the deans and how it is enacted by the deans in the education sector. Through this comparative account, Collinson and Collinson (2009) claim that the twin concepts of how followers (or subordinates, as they are often called) perceive their leaders on the one hand and their leadership and enactment on the other, is making growing incursions into the HEIs. In the context of perceptions of leadership, it is important to mention here that the perception of the dean or the head of the department as a leader is also an area that is under investigation, leading to a possible linkage of the concept of deans as leaders to enactment of leadership (Collinson & Collinson, 2009; Bryman & Lilley, 2009). A study by Breakwell, and Tytherleigh (2010) examined whether HE institutional performance can be shown to be related to the characteristics of the head of the institution. The study explored the relationship of several sociodemographic characteristics, recently identified as being consistent amongst university leaders in the UK (see Breakwell and Tytherleigh 2008a), to several objective measures of university performance. In another study, that of Bryman and Lilley (2009), it was argued that, leadership aspect of deans as the head of the department is a very important area that needs further investigation. Similarly, Bryman and Lilley (2009) argue and bring into focus the effectiveness of leadership of deans as an important aspect that could be investigated in the context of the governance or management by deans.

The arguments provided above have brought into focus the importance and need to study the effectiveness of leadership and governance by deans in HEIs. However, some oppose this argument, like Gronn (2009), who argues that there is a need to shift the way leadership practice is perceived. Some argue that leadership research need to move away from what could be considered as good or effective leadership to leadership configuration (Gronn, 2009). In fact, Gronn (2009) emphasizes that the difficulties posed by dominant discourses

and constructs of leadership should enable future research to focus on implications of such a shift, providing an argument that opposes the need to study effectiveness of leadership. Thus, while there are arguments for and against considering leadership effectiveness as an important aspect of leadership in HEIs that needs further investigation, the growing challenges faced by HEIs indicate that it is essential to address the leadership effectiveness issue. This argument is supported further by those who argue that there is a lack of thorough understanding of leadership effectiveness and governance aspects pertaining to deans in HEIs (Huy, 2001; de Boer & Goedegebuure, 2001; Cullen, 2014).

It must be acknowledged that these arguments by Gronn (2009), Huy (2001), de Boer and Goedegebuure (2001), Bryman and Lilley, (2009) and Pfeffer (2009) provide only a partial view of the field. In the words of Whitchurch (2008), studies underestimate the current significance of leadership especially within professional services that assume boundary spanning roles in newer and more teaching and employer-oriented institutions. Thus, the arguments of Bolden et al. (2009) assume significance who claim that contextual and systemic nature of effective leadership practice in HEIs need to be recognised and investigated through a more holistic view of leadership in HEIs as they claim that good leadership matters.

A critical review of these aspects is needed to gain an understanding of the various challenges that determine the development of leadership models and styles, and management aspects in academia. Thus, the subsequent discussions highlight the key challenges faced by HEIs with a focus on business schools.

4. Analysis and Discussions

4.1 Key challenges facing Higher Education: A focus on business schools

Business schools across of the world have grown rapidly due to a spurt in the demand for business education since the last decade and a half (Hawawini, 2005). Whether this demand will continue remains to be seen owing to a number of challenges (Ivory et al., 2008). Some of the serious challenges faced by business schools that have been identified include evaluation of research performance (Thomson Reuters, 2010) recruitment, retention and staff development, reputation, finance, leadership, business education being globalised, shortfall in faculty availability, curriculum issues, changing technologies, governance, strategic choices

and qualification and skills of faculty (Ivory et al., 2006; Ivory et al., 2007; Hawawini, 2005; Mayer & Wilde, 2015; Obeng-Ofori & Anane, 2015; Nyahongo, 2015). While these challenges can potentially affect business schools, the current status of many business schools does not indicate that the schools are recognising the need to face these challenges. Although these challenges create obstacles for the business schools to achieve success, amongst them, challenges posed by leadership and management problems are considered to be more serious as it is felt that leadership and management aspects are not being addressed by business schools properly (Pfeffer, 2009; Cullen, 2014). For instance, de Boer and Goedegebuure (2001) argue that there is a growing emphasis on the role of deans as leaders in many institutions. In this context there is no consensus about the essence of leadership or the means by which it can be identified, achieved or measured (Bennis & Nanus, 1985) and Marshall (2006) extends this argument to those in academia who are in the middle level of governance (also see Ortalo-Mane, 2014). Some of the key challenges affecting leadership although not exhaustive have been identified and presented in the following Table 2.

Factors affecting Leadership	References
Leadership styles and leadership practice	Petrie, 2014; Middlehurst, 1993;
Management style (change management, managing conflict, performance indicators and management)	Bowen-Hartung & Brown, 2013; Cinar & Kaban, 2012
Organisational setting	Mayer & Wilde, 2015; Lowe et al., 1996;
Decision quality	Meyer et al., 2016 McNamee & Celona, 2005; Borchers, 2005
Follower commitment	Soha et al. 2016; Kouzes & Posner, 2002;
Follower satisfaction	Nyahongo, 2015; Verhaegen, 2005;
Organisational culture	Nazem & Mozaiini, 2014; Cameron & Quinn, 2006
Leadership effectiveness	Ibrahim et al. 2016; Thomas, 1993;

Table 2: Critical Factors Affecting Leadership

Although the challenges identified is by no means limited to the above, some of the fundamental aspects that prop up these challenges within the academia and business schools in particular, include massification of higher education, globalisation, faculty shortage, curriculum changes (Cornuel, 2007), future developments and funding crisis (Ivory et al., 2006, 2007; Cornuel, 2007). The following discussions review the understanding of how these challenges have been addressed.

4.2 Leadership style and leadership practice

One of the serious concerns in the HEIs is to develop leadership skills. However, hardly any focus has been on the issue of developing leadership capability (Moses & Roe, 1990; Green & McDade, 1991; Middlehurst, 1993; Petrie, 2014). In particular, developing leadership capabilities in learning and teaching has attracted even less interest (Marshall, 2006; Hofmeyer et al. 2015). Concerns have also been raised regarding faculty motivation for research as well as evaluation of research performance of the institution (Thomson Reuters, 2010; Hardré et al., 2011). Limited studies that touch upon the leadership development aspects in learning, teaching and research, focus more on developing an understanding of the knowledge skills and capabilities required by leaders meaning what to develop in such leaders rather than how to develop (Stark, 2002; Stark et al., 2002; Marshall, 2006; Petrie, 2014). In addition, important attributes of leadership such as leadership styles although extensively dealt with in different segments of the educational sector including HEIs, there is a concern that much more needs to be done in developing knowledge on how leadership styles could be related to effective leaders in the HEIs to deal with the changing needs of the HEIs (Basham, 2010).

Further leadership style as a concept has been developed significantly over the last few decades and many different leadership styles have been discovered as being practiced by leaders in various organisations e.g. transactional and transformational leadership styles (Bass, 1997; Bass & Avolio, 2000). However, some scholars (e.g. Coats, 2000, Williams, 2001) are unsure on which of these leadership styles (attributes) could be related to successful leaders in HEIs. In the same vein it needs to be highlighted (e.g. McShaine & Von Glinow, 2000) that it is important to concentrate on leadership behaviour or practice or the perception of followers about leadership behaviour in organisations in order to develop leaders for the present and future. Some have emphasised the need to rethink the leadership practices (Astin & Astin, 2000). In fact, some have developed instruments to measure leadership practice (e.g.

Leadership Behaviour Description Questionnaire (LBDQ)) that could be used to develop and enhance leadership practice although the applicability of such tools to varying situations is under question. These arguments emphasise that leadership practice, while attracting the attention as a unique variable of leadership development, has also been related to organisational performance, leadership effectiveness and other factors that impact leadership process (Leary et al., 1999). Leadership practice has been considered as a major challenge to HEIs in the context of developing leadership in HEIs (e.g. Herbst & Conradie, 2011).

In addition, one of the major problems is that efforts that have been put to develop leadership capability in HEIs with regard to learning, teaching and research vary widely across institutions resulting in lack of generalisability or uniformity (Marshall, 2006; Hofmeyer et al. 2015). For instance, some of the institutions appear to focus on developing the knowledge, skills and capabilities within the disciplines relevant to the faculty while others have attempted to develop leadership capabilities in teaching. However, there is a lack of focus on developing knowledge, skills and capabilities of faculty keeping at the fore the leadership component as well as enhancement of the current understanding of the faculty with regard to tasks identified with effective leadership in the literature (Marshall, 2006; Mayer & Wilde, 2015). For instance, while developing teaching skills may entail the faculty to enhance their knowledge, skill and capability in regard to an understanding of students, learning, teachers and teaching, pedagogy and the contexts within which they teach, leadership related skills may require enhancement of their understanding on how to establish directions, planning, budgeting, problem solving and staffing (Marshall, 2006). This includes leadership skills required for enhancing research collaborations and producing research outcomes which is also considered a major challenge in HEI leadership (Murray et al., 2014). Though many institutions attempt to develop programmes intended to build in leadership capabilities with regard to learning, teaching and research much needs to be done in integrating such programmes with leadership and leadership development with an objective to improve (Marshall, 2008). Within this argument it is necessary to include the research component also (Murray et al., 2014).

The preceding discussions clearly indicate that there is a need to better understand the challenges in developing leadership skills with a focus on learning, teaching and research. Moreover, there is an added need to identify specific leadership styles that can be developed in leaders of HEIs. It is important to address this issue as they impact the learning

environment in which students learn, their professional practice, teaching and research (Marshall, 2001; Dearn et al., 2002; Prosser et. al., 2006; Murray et al., 2014).

4.3 Management style

Interest in understanding the relationship between job performance, motivation and management style has been on the rise (Marturano & Gosling, 2008). While on the one hand leadership skills of academia in business schools are sought to be understood further, on the other the managerial capability of academia has also come under review. Leadership and management have been differentiated in the sense that competent managers are needed to be effective leaders (Wilson et al., 2006). For instance, Cavico and Mujtaba (2009) argue that, as a leader, the dean is expected to develop and create awareness about the vision, mission and core values of the school whereas, as a manager, the dean is expected to act leading to the achievement of the school's values. Thus, there is clear distinction between the leadership and managerial characteristics. If there is a scrutiny of leadership aspects, then it appears by corollary that it is not possible to ignore the managerial capability of the leadership especially regarding the achievement of the stated goals of a school.

Some argue that most leaders' behaviour can be brought under management styles, for instance impoverished management or middle-of-the-road management and the like (Marturano & Gosling, 2008). Another describes management style in terms of a managerial grid (Marturano & Gosling, 2008) and is also termed as the model of managerial behaviour (Northouse, 2004). However, literature shows that descriptions and depictions of management style are not uniform and management style as an attribute poses a major challenge to organisations including HEIs. In addition, there are a few other management challenges such as change management, conflict management and performance management that are commonplace in HEIs that also warrant investigation. More investigation needs to be carried out with regard to these challenges and how leaders manage to overcome these challenges (Bowen-Hartung & Brown, 2013; Cinar & Kaban, 2012). This implies that management capability is an essential aspect affecting leadership in HEIs and further research is needed to understand how leaders manage challenges.

4.4 Organisational setting

Research in leadership has been conducted in multiple organisational settings such as the public sector (e.g. Waldman et al., 1990; Cowen, 1990; Koh et al., 1991) and the private sector (e.g. Avolio et al., 1991; Bryce, 1989; Keller, 1992). This includes HEIs (e.g. Lowe et

al., 1996; Mayer & Wilde, 2015). However, some (e.g. Lowe et al., 1996) argue that the relationship among various components of certain leadership practices considered to be widely found in leaders and different organisational settings is not well understood. For instance, Lowe et al. (1996) (also see Porter, 2015) argue that more research is needed in understanding the relationship among transformational and transactional leadership constructs and leadership effectiveness in different organisational settings implying that organisational settings impact how leaders lead.

4.5 Decision Quality

Decision as an important concept has been widely studied and decision analysis as a concept has been a major topic of interest for decades (McNamee & Celona, 2005; Kyguoliene & Bakanauskiene, 2016) Theory on decisions as a concept shows that it involves three aspects namely decisions, decision making and quality of decisions (McNamee & Celona, 2005; Kyguoliene & Bakanauskiene, 2016). In spite of continuous efforts in this field, an area that has been of major concern has been the identification of good decisions and bad decisions in the decision-making process. In this context, this is concerned with the outcome or results of those decisions and such a concern arises because of lack of understanding of whether good decisions have resulted in good outcomes or bad outcomes and vice versa (McNamee & Celona, 2005). McNamee and Celona, (2005) argue that an important reason that could contribute to this is the uncertainty surrounding a decision-making process that is created by the lack of complete knowledge about the world on the part of the decision makers. It is reasonable to apply these arguments to leaders in the HEIs also as the situation surrounding the HEIs is constantly changing and leaders are challenged with a continuous need to update their knowledge of those surroundings. Thus prior to taking decisions leaders need to analyse their surroundings and most importantly the decisions themselves. Decision analysis, particularly decision evaluation, becomes an important aspect in decision making. An essential part of decision analysis is the decision quality. There is a need to understand the quality aspect of decisions made. Quality of decisions can be operationally defined as the difference between good and bad decisions. Good and bad decisions are the outcomes of decision-making.

Borchers (2005) argues that quality of decision could be defined as a science that is filled with many aspects including organizing principles, ethics, laws, or quantitative relationships that facilitate consistency with values, objectives, belief systems, and empirical evidence. The

simplest of definitions of quality of decisions is given by Talley (2011) who argues that quality of decision is considered to be the quality of the decision-making process and is understood as the success of the outcome of the process. However, Talley (2011) cautions that decisions need to be made prior to getting the outcome and hence quality is considered as the best possible outcome that is achieved although it is short of the desired outcome.

It can be seen that there are multiple definitions pertaining to quality as a concept that is applicable to decisions made and the process of decision making although those definitions are not the same and somewhat contradictory. The definitions range from ones that are simple to those that are complicated with the definition given by Muhammad et al. (2009) being the simplest and the one given by Borchers (2005) being the most complex. But these definitions clearly articulate the importance of the quality of decisions as a concept because decision quality needs to be assessed prior to taking decisions and such an assessment needs to be compared with the outcomes to know the extent of quality that could be found in a decision. This makes decision making process as one of the hard things in life.

Based on the above arguments it can be construed that two of the important factors that affect leadership behaviour is the decision making and decision quality. In the field of governance, decision making, and quality of decision making are viewed as major factors by some (e.g. Jones, 2011; Seltzer & Bass, 1990) that influence governance. For instance, Leadership Behaviour Description Questionnaire (LBDQ) focuses on decision making as an important factor (Seltzer & Bass 1990). In the same vein, Muhammad et al. (2009) argue that quality of decision making is an important aspect that can determine the survival of an institution. Thus, decision quality is an important factor that needs to be understood in the context of HEIs.

4.6 Follower commitment

Follower commitment has been found as an important challenge (e.g. Kouzes & Posner, 2002; Soha et al. 2016) in organisations. In their research on the effect of transformational leadership on teachers' commitment to change in Hong Kong, Yu et al. (2002) found that there is only 11% of the variance in the teachers' commitment to change in Hong Kong could be explained by transformational leadership although regression results indicated that there is positive relationship between transformational leadership style and teachers' commitment in Hong Kong. In another study although not in the HEIs, Rengpian (2007) investigated the influence of perceived leadership practices on followers' organisational commitment and

found that leadership practices have a significant influence on organisational commitment of followers. While some studies show that getting the best workers and keeping them committed to the organisation leads to increased competitiveness and helps in organisational survival (Bergmann et al., 2000), some others empirical results contradict this statement. For instance, the study conducted by Soha et al. (2016) on public universities in Malaysia showed that their leadership influences staff commitment partially. These arguments clearly indicate that follower commitment is an important factor and challenge that leaders need to reckon with.

4.7 Follower satisfaction

Literature (e.g. Verhaegen, 2005) highlights that amongst the many challenges that affect business schools is the recruitment and retention of faculty which depends upon amongst other factors, faculty satisfaction, an argument supported by Nyahongo (2015). In a study spread over 181 European business schools, Verhaegen (2005) reported that a number of factors affect faculty satisfaction which includes the concern of leadership on how to handle faculty satisfaction. The results of the survey conducted by Verhaegen (2005) show that faculty satisfaction was low with respect to research environment satisfaction and explained that this could be due to the fact that deans of those schools have paid less attention to this important aspect. Furthermore, Verhaegen (2005) argues that assessment of problems associated with faculty satisfaction should be an important area of concern to the deans. However, Harrell-Cook et al. (2017) have questioned the relationship between employee satisfaction and leadership and have argued that it is not necessary that leadership alone can influence employee satisfaction in the context of firms. Although the arguments of Harrell-Cook et al. (2017) are in a different context than HEIs, it is possible to find similar situations in the HEIs and it is important to note the contrasting situations to have greater clarity on the relationship between leadership and employee satisfaction. For instance, Hijazi et al. (2016) reported that their study on private university employees showed that transactional leadership style had a negative impact on those employees. These arguments amply demonstrate that follower satisfaction is a major issue when it comes to better understanding the challenges that needs to be tackled by deans of business schools.

4.8 Organisational culture

Human resource professionals and academics acknowledge culture as a key factor that drives an organisation's performance (The University of Queensland, 2013). Some (e.g. Becher,

2011) argue that any right culture supports the implementation of strategy, enhances productivity and innovation leading to an organisation deriving competitive advantage. Here are a number of advantages that organisational culture ensures, for instance, organisational culture:

- Is effective in achieving proper use of the intellectual capital (Lynn, 1999).
- Helps an organisation in coping with a changing environment (Schein, 1999).
- Affects the communication skills and decision-making process in an organisation (Kowalezyk & Pawlish, 2002).
- Affects organisational system operations, productivity, leadership actions (Taylor, 2003).

Organisational culture is defined as a notion that manifests in the shared basic values, beliefs, attitudes, assumptions and behaviours of the people of an organisation (Pettigrew, 1979). Some argue, for instance Hofstede (1991), that culture is apportioned under four dimensions namely: collectivism vs individualism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance and masculinity vs femininity while Schein (1992) defined culture as composed of explicit behaviour, signs and shared values. As far as leadership literature is concerned it is seen that organisational culture affects leader behaviour, and leader behaviour influences the culture of an organisation (Latham, 2013). From these discussions it emerges that culture is an important aspect of an organisation including HEIs and shows that it has been found to be an important factor that continues to attract attention, particularly with regard to leadership in HEIs (Imam, 2013).

An important aspect of organisational culture in the context of HEIs that needs attention is its ability to influence organisational performance (Cameron & Quinn, 2006). While literature is replete with research outcomes on relating organisational culture to organisational performance, there have been calls in the HEIs to implement culture strategy in organisations that is aligned with leadership capability and other processes to ensure sustainable performance (The University of Queensland, 2013). This implies that in studies that link organisational leadership and organisational performance including leadership effectiveness, culture needs to be involved to understand its influence on the leadership behaviour, follower behaviour, organisational effectiveness including leadership effectiveness and organisational

processes such as decision-making (Nazem & Mozaiini, 2014). Any research which looks at the leadership of deans or anyone else needs to take into account organisational culture, because this is an important factor that influences leadership practice.

However, considering fact that culture has been symbolized in many forms for instance as country, nation, and society (Sekaran, 1983; Nasif et al., 1991), it is possible to infer that culture can be defined and characterized in many ways. Keeping in view such a diverse representation, it can be inferred that culture, particularly organisational culture could be identified with demographic characteristic. Some of the demographic factors that are widely used in leadership surveys include country or place of residence. For instance, Sanderson (2007) used place of residence as a demographic variable in a study of multi-institutions on leadership. Similarly, in their study on student leadership, Shertzer et al. (2005) used place of residence as a demographic factor. In both studies evidence has been provided about the influence of place of residence on leadership aspect although literature surrounding place of residence as an influencing factor on leadership experience is not clear (Hamrick et al., 2002; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). The studies cited above provide evidence for using the factor 'place of residence' as demographic variable. In addition, demographic variables are often used as control variables in research (Polston-Murdoch, 2013).

4.9 Leadership effectiveness

The leadership literature will reveal that ambiguity in no uncertain measure surrounds publications that are boasting to provide lasting solutions in relating leadership effectiveness and organisational performance. For instance, some have indicated that the evidence linking changes in leadership and its influence on performance is weak (Brown, 1982; Fazel & D'Itri, 1999; Dopson et al. 2016). Other research outcomes indicate that there is little or no impact on organisational performance and change in leadership (Gamson & Scotch, 1964; Eitzen & Yetman, 1972; and Allen et al., 1979) and association between leadership and organisational performance is non-existent and contradictory (Liebersson & O'Connor, 1972; and House & Baetz, 1979). Some argue (e.g. Dopson et al. 2016) that there are limitations in the current state of knowledge and there are gaps in regard to the relationship between leadership and its effectiveness, particularly in the HEI sector.

While on the one side there are strong criticisms on the utility of establishing a relationship between leadership and organisational performance, on the other there are others who have

highlighted the positive influence exerted by leadership on organisational performance and the importance of leadership effectiveness. For instance, Fiedler (1967) claims that leadership influences organisational performance and stresses the fact that leadership effectiveness is a crucial predictor of organisational performance. Further Mott (1972) argues that leadership is important to group or team performance. Others argue that successfully performing organisations are inextricably connected to leadership (Bennis & Nanus, 1985) and leadership has positive impact on performance (Yukl, 1998).

In a situation where there is a sharp contrast on the arguments put forward for and against the importance and utility of linking leadership with organisational performance it is important to note that research and practice in regard to leadership effectiveness and organisational performance in general have been conducted under the assumption that leadership effectiveness impacts organisational performance (Alchian, 1986). What complicates the issue further is the lack of generalizable empirical support that could confirm the positive relationship between leadership and organisational performance particularly in the context of HEIs (Thomas, 1993; Ibrahim et al. 2016).

The arguments given above culminate in the inference that literature on the relationship between leadership effectiveness and organisational performance is marred with confusion, assumptions, discrepancies and sharply divided research outcomes. Amongst the several ambiguities that characterise the research on the association between leadership effectiveness and organisational performance are contexts and skill that could be considered as two of the most important issues that are not well addressed in the literature. Particularly with regard HEIs the problem is more pronounced due to lack of in-depth research in the area of leadership effectiveness in HEIs. This is a major challenge for any researcher who would like to gain an understanding of how leadership effectiveness impacts performance of HEIs.

5. Implications of research to theory and practice

From a theoretical perspective, this research addresses this important gap in the leadership literature. Principally the research has established which type of leadership style is prevalent in the business schools, what type of leadership style is practised, how the leadership practice could influence leadership effectiveness, what factors affect the leadership practice and what type of leadership factors influences the leadership practice and leadership effectiveness. This research effort therefore advances the current understanding of the leadership behaviour within the public-sector context (i.e. higher education institutions).

From a practice perspective, the findings of this research have implications, either directly or indirectly, for a wide range of stakeholders in the HEI sector, namely the deans of business schools, the academics within business schools and administrative staff and the institutional managers in HEIs. In particular, this research provides a better understanding of the critical factors affecting leadership practice of deans of business schools and how the styles' influence on leadership practice and its effectiveness. The understanding of these factors can help leaders to address the challenges that they face in leading the business schools effectively. In doing so, this could positively influence leadership decision quality and follower satisfaction.

6. Conclusions

This research has critically reviewed the extant literature for leadership challenges from a public-sector context specifically faced by the deans of business schools in the higher education institutions. The review of the literature provided the theoretical basis for determining the nature of the leadership challenges factors, thus contributing to the extant leadership scholarship with a public-sector focus. Factors such as leadership decision quality, follower-commitment, follower-satisfaction, organisational settings and organisational culture were found to be important aspects that needed to be addressed by the deans of business schools for effective leadership. This research posits that a better understanding of the leadership styles of deans of business schools and how their styles' influence on leadership practice, the relationship between leadership practice and leadership effectiveness and how leadership style translates into leadership effectiveness may allow us to better understand how effective deans of business schools are in practice.

It should be noted that this study is based on desk-based research and the readers should be aware of the limited scope and indeed interpret the discussions presented in this paper within the context of these limitations. Nevertheless, this research does stimulate further studies to bring out knowledge that could be useful to deans in understanding how to use appropriate management styles in particular organisational settings and organisational culture that is needed to support them in their leadership practice as leaders. Deans could identify specific management styles, organisational settings and organisational culture and implement them with a view to being more effective leaders. A more fundamental significance of this study is

that understanding the challenges could help policy makers to have an opportunity to know what leadership style is prevalent in the deans of business schools and how the leaders could be supported. In a similar vein, future researchers could gain knowledge of other factors that have not been addressed in this research, thereby enhancing the knowledge on deans' leadership effectiveness further.

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